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(54) A phase staggered full-bridge converter with soft-PWM switching

Phasenversetzter Vollbrückenwandler mit sanfter PWM-Umschaltung

Convertisseur en pont complet et phases décalées avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce

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Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The present invention generally relates to zero-voltage or zero-current switched ("soft switched") DC-to-DC converters. In particular, the invention relates to a switching converter that achieves nearly lossless switching using pulse width modulation control of switching transistors in a full-bridge converter.

[0002] In the past, DC-to-DC converters have been proposed for converting a DC input voltage from one voltage level to a different DC output voltage level. Typically, full-bridge DC-to-DC converters include a primary side which converts the DC input voltage into a series of DC pulses. The primary side applies the DC pulses to a primary winding of a transformer which induces a voltage potential across a secondary winding of the transformer within a secondary side of the converter.

[0003] The primary side may be divided into a leading leg and a trailing leg connected in parallel with one another and with the incoming power source. Each of the leading and trailing legs include at least a pair of switching devices (e.g., transistors) connected in series via center nodes in the leading and trailing legs. The primary winding is connected between the center nodes of the leading and trailing legs. By interconnecting the switching transistors and the primary side of the transformer in the above described manner, the transistors may be selectively switched to reverse the direction of current flow through the primary winding of the transformer. Current flow through the primary winding of the transformer generates an electromagnetic field which the transformer core guides through the secondary winding, thereby setting up a voltage across the secondary winding. This voltage is a function of the ratio of the number of turns in the secondary winding to the number of turns in the primary winding.

[0004] The secondary winding of the transformer is connected in parallel with a diode bridge rectifier and a low-pass filter to rectify and filter the output voltage of the secondary winding to produce a desired DC voltage at the output terminal of the converter. The diode bridge rectifying circuit uses a combination of diodes connected in series with one another and aligned in opposed directions to effect rectification. In the past, diode bridge rectifying circuits proposed within DC-to-DC converters have experienced losses due to "reverse recovery" inherent within the operation of rectifier diodes in the bridge rectifying circuit. During the reverse recovery period, a forward conducting diode is in the process of switching from a forward conducting state to a reverse blocking state. During the reverse recovery period, the diode does not block current in the reverse direction, but allows current to flow "backwards" through the diode until the diode enters its normal reverse blocking state. Power loss occurs during this switching process. Reverse recovery of the diodes also induces additional losses in the primary switches.

[0005] In the past, DC-to-DC converters have been proposed which effect regulation of the output voltage based on a "hard switching" control operation. A hard switching type of converter operates such that the internal switching transistors change between on and off states while large voltage potentials exist across the transistors and while large currents are flowing through the transistors.

[0006] Hard switching converters have met with limited success in high frequency applications, since the hard switching operation causes large power losses during the switching operation. The power losses incurred during the hard switching operation are directly proportional to switching frequency. Thus, as the switching frequency increases, the losses increase.

[0007] Moreover, in hard switching converters, the parasitic effects within the components (e.g., the transistors, transformer and the like), cause current and voltage ringings which generate large amounts of electromagnetic interference (EMI). EMI is undesirable because it may interfere with the operation of nearby circuitry.

[0008] Power losses due to switching are undesirable as they lower the converter efficiency. The lower the efficiency of the converter, the more input power is wasted to generate a desired amount of output power, thereby leading to higher costs per unit of output power. More importantly, the excessive power dissipation may damage the switches. Examples of parasitic effects include, but are not limited to, parasitic capacitance, leakage inductance created by imperfections in the transformer coils, and diode reverse recovery effects.

[0009] Lower switching losses allow the converter to use higher switching, frequencies. Higher switching frequencies, in turn, allow the use of smaller passive components and a corresponding reduction in size and weight of the converter. Generally, small size and light weight are desirable in a switching converter. Thus, it is desirable to operate the converter at a high frequency. However, as noted above, hard switching converters have been unable to operate effectively at high frequencies.

[0010] In an attempt to overcome some of the disadvantages of hard switching converters, a different type of converter has been proposed generally referred to as a "soft switching" converter. Soft switching converters operate such that the switching transistors within the primary side of the converter change states while having low voltage potentials there across and low levels of current flowing therethrough. Soft switching converters attempt to take advantage of the parasitic effects of the components within the converter in order to reduce the voltage potentials across and current flows through the switches before effecting a switching operation.

[0011] More specifically, soft switching converters adjust the switch timing in order to charge and to discharge the parasitic switch capacitances of the transistors through the use of current supplied by the magnetizing

inductance of the primary winding of the transformer, thereby reducing the voltage across off or open transistors and current flow through on or closed transistors at the time such transistors switch states. Soft switching reduces the power losses during the switching operation, thereby enabling the converter to operate at higher frequencies, with higher efficiency and with reduced electromagnetic interference.

[0012] One of the popular soft switching converters is called a phase-shift full-bridge converter and uses a phase-shift control technique. Examples of such phase-shift control techniques are illustrated in U.S. Patent No. 5,442,540 to Hua et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,132,889 to Hitchcock, et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,157,592 to Walters, U.S. Patent No. 5,539,630 to Pietkiewicz and U.S. Patent No. 4,864,479 to Steigerwald et al.

[0013] A DC-to-DC converter having the features defined in the preamble of claim 1 is known from "Novel soft-switching full-bridge converter with magnetic amplifiers", M. Brokovic et al., proceedings of the International Telecommunications Conference (INTELEC), Vancouver, Oct. 30 - Nov. 3, 1994, no. Conf. 16, 30 October 1994, pages 155-162, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, ISBN 0-7803-2035-2.

[0014] However, the operation of a typical phase-shift, full-bridge converter is deficient in three areas: Failure to support soft switching at light loads, switching loss caused by rectifier diode reverse recovery, and additional circuitry required to phase-shift the control signals. Typically, the load must draw 50% of the nominal load current in order to ensure soft switching for primary switching devices. Consequently, the stress on the switching devices is similar to that in a hard-switched converter, defeating the purpose of introducing soft switching. The loss associated with reverse recovery of rectifier diodes not only increases losses through the rectifier diodes themselves but also induces additional losses in the primary switching devices. In addition, reverse recovery of rectifier diodes increases the required voltage ratings for rectifier diodes and the primary switching devices. Furthermore, the added complexity of phase-shift control increases the size, weight, and power consumption of such a converter.

[0015] A need remains within the industry for an improved DC-to-DC converter using a simple pulse-width-modulation scheme that can maintain soft switching, even at light loads. It is an object of the present invention to meet this need.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

[0016] It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved DC-to-DC converter which performs soft switching under the control of pulse width modulated switching signals to overcome the above problems of known DC-to-DC converters.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0017] To solve the above object, the present invention provides a DC-to-DC converter according to claim 1.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

[0018]

Fig. 1 illustrates a schematic diagram of a DC-to-DC converter according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention utilizing full-bridge soft switching pulse width modulated control.

Fig. 2A illustrates the current flow paths through the. DC-to-DC converter of Fig. 1 during a first energy transfer stage (stage 1).

Fig. 2B illustrates the current follow path through the DC-to-DC converter of Fig. 1 during a trailing leg transition stage (stage 2).

Fig. 2C illustrates the current flow path through the DC-to-DC converter of Fig. 1 during a free wheeling stage (stage 3).

Fig. 2D illustrates the current flow path through the DC-to-DC converter of Fig. 1 during a first part of the leading transition stage (stage 4).

Fig. 2E illustrates the current flow path through the DC-to-DC converter of Fig. 1 during a second part of the leading leg transition stage (stage 5).

Fig. 2F illustrates the current flow path through the DC-to-DC converter of Fig. 1 during a second energy transfer stage (stage 6).

Fig. 3 illustrates exemplary wave forms representative of the internal operation of the converter of Fig. 1.

Fig. 4 illustrates a graph showing the efficiency of the converter of Fig. 1 at several load current levels.

Fig. 5 illustrates an alternative embodiment of the present invention in which two converters have their primary sides connected in parallel to handle twice the input current and their secondary sides connected in series to produce twice the output voltage of a single converter. This parallel/series configuration can be generalized to include n converter modules.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] Referring now to Fig. 1, a full-bridge converter 10 is illustrated which performs soft switching based on pulse width modulated (PWM) switching. The full-bridge converter 10 includes a primary side 12 and a secondary side 14 interconnected through a transformer 13. The primary side 12 includes a power source 16 and an input capacitor 18 connected in parallel with a leading leg 20 and a trailing leg 22. The leading leg 20 includes first and second switching transistors Q1 and Q2, respectively, connected in series. The trailing leg 22 includes third and fourth switching transistors Q3 and Q4, respectively, connected in series.

[0020] A transformer 13 includes primary and secondary windings 24 and 26, and a magnetizing inductance 48. A primary winding 24 of the transformer 13 is connected at nodes 28 and 30 to the leading and trailing legs 20 and 22, respectively. The secondary winding 26 of the transformer 13 is connected in parallel to a full-bridge rectifier 32, a free wheeling diode D9 and a low pass filter 34. The low pass filter 34 includes an inductor 36 and a capacitor 38. The diode bridge 32 includes four diodes D5-D8 connected in standard bridge configurations. The diode bridge 32 is connected at nodes 40 and 42 to the secondary side 26 of the transformer 13, and at nodes 44 and 46 to the free wheeling diode D9. The diode bridge 32 includes saturable reactors SR1 and SR2 connected in series with diodes D5 and D6, respectively, in the first and second legs. As explained below, the saturable reactors SR1 and SR2 and the free wheeling diode D9 help support soft-PWM switching and allow the device to eliminate reverse recovery losses.

[0021] The input of the converter 10 is driven by the power source 16 which produces an input voltage Vin. Input capacitor 18 smoothes the input voltage Vin and stores energy returned to the source 16 from the components of the primary side 12 during switching. Switching transistors Q1-Q4 may be formed from metal oxide semiconductor field effect transistors (MOSFETS) and the like. Optionally, other types of switching elements may be utilized so long as the elements include, or are connected to circuits that emulate, parasitic capacitance and diode characteristics which may be utilized as explained below in connection with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] The switching transistors Q1-Q4 are connected to form a full-bridge on the input side of the converter 10. Each of the switching transistors Q1-Q4 inherently includes a parasitic diode and a parasitic capacitance. Thus, the parasitic diodes D1-D4 and parasitic capacitances C1-C4 are illustrated as being connected in parallel across the drain and source of associated transistors Q1-Q4. The parasitic diodes D1-D4 and capacitances C1-C4 are inherently associated with the switching transistors Q1-Q4. The transistors Q3, Q4 are turned on and off by pulse width modulated (PWM) switching signals received at the gates G3-G4. By way of example only, the PWM switching signals may be modulated whereby each transistor Q3-Q4 is turned on upon receipt of a high pulse at the gate G3-G4 and remains on until the pulse goes low. Transistors Q1 and Q2 are switched by approximately 50% duty cycle control signals running at the converter 10 operating frequency. The switching signals are generated by a feed back control circuit 15 (explained in more detail below).

[0023] The output of the secondary winding 26 is rectified through the diode bridge 32 build from the diodes DS-D8. Two legs of the diode bridge 32 contain saturable reactors SR1 and SR2 in series with the diodes D5 and D6, respectively. The saturable reactors SR1 and SR2 operate in the same manner as a switch and reduce the diode reverse recovery losses (as explained in more detail below). The free wheeling diode D9, connected in parallel across the output of the diode bridge 32, conducts in order to allow the output current to continue to flow to the load when the voltage drop across the transformer secondary winding 26 approaches zero. Finally, the output of the diode bridge rectifier 32 passes through the low pass filter 34, which includes the inductor 36 and the capacitor 38 to provide the output voltage Vout.

[0024] The feedback control circuit 15 senses the output voltage Vout and adjusts the timing of the PWM switching signals applied to the gates G3-G4 of the transistors Q3-Q4 to turn transistors Q3-Q4 on and off. The feedback control circuit 15 may use any conventional voltage sensing circuit to sample output voltage Vout, including an analog to digital converter (not shown). The feedback control circuit 15 may also include a microcontroller which analyzes the digital representation of the output voltage Vout, determines what adjustments to make to the switch timing, and provides switching signals to the gate G1-G4 to control the transistors Q1-Q4. Thus, the entire feedback control circuit 15 may be implemented with a single microcontroller, though discrete logic circuits may also be used to build the control circuit 15.

[0025] Turning to Figs. 2A-2E, a step-by-step analysis is provided of the first half cycle of the converter 10 shown in Fig. 1.

[0026] Fig 2A illustrates the converter 10 while in an "energy transfer stage." The converter 10 initiates the energy transfer stage by soft switching transistors Q1 and Q3 to on states. The energy transfer stage continues until transistor Q3 is turned off. When transistors Q1 and Q3 are both on, the input power supply Vin transfers energy to the transformer primary winding 24 via the path illustrated by arrow 50. Current flows through transistor Q1, primary winding 24, transistor Q3 and back to Vin. As the current flows through the primary winding 24, current builds up in the inductance 48. As explained below, the current buildup in inductance 48 is later used to charge capacitor C3. Transistors Q1 and Q3 remain on during the energy transfer stage.

[0027] As current flows through the primary winding 24, a voltage develops across the transformer secondary winding 26 on the secondary side 14 that is a function of the turns ratio of the transformer 13 and the input voltage Vin. Current on the secondary side 12 flows from node 40 through saturable reactor SR1, diode D5, node 46, low pass filter 34, to the load (as illustrated by arrow 51). The current then flows back through node 44 and diode D7 to the opposite end of the secondary winding 26 (as illustrated by arrow 53). Diodes D6 and D8 are reverse biased and thus are in fully reverse blocking states.

[0028] The current flow through saturable reactor SR1 forces the saturable reactor SR1 into a low impedance saturation state after a very brief forward blocking state during which the saturable reactor SR1 transitions to the low impedance state. In saturation, the saturable reactor SR1 acts like a short circuit in that it presents substantially

zero resistance to current flow. As a result, minimum power is dissipated across the saturable reactor SR1 while current is flowing therethrough. The rectified voltage output of the diode rectifier 32 keeps the free-wheeling diode D9 turned off.

[0029] Fig. 3 illustrates several waveforms within the converter 10 during different stages of the soft switching operation as controlled by the signals supplied to gates G1-G4. In Fig. 3, Vgs1 - Vgs4 represent the voltage waveforms that appear across the gates G1-G4 to the source terminals of the transistors Q1-Q4, respectively. The feedback control circuit 15 controls waveforms Vgs1 - Vgs4 through the PWM switching signals. Fig. 3 also shows the current Img determined by input voltage 16 and the magnetizing inductance 48. The current through diodes D5 and D7 is identical and shown as Id5 and Id7. The current through diodes D6 and D8 is identical and shown as Id6 and Id8. Current through the free-wheeling diode 9 is denoted Id9. Waveforms Vpr and Ipr show the voltage and current respectively across the primary winding 24. The time interval T1 denotes the time during which the system remains in the energy- transfer stage. During time interval T1, the voltage Vpr rises and the current Ipr builds in the transformer primary winding 24 as shown in-Fig. 3.

[0030] As illustrated in Fig. 3, transistors Q1 and Q3 are turned to an on state simultaneously since the switching signals Vgs1 and Vgs3 switch to a high state simultaneously. There is no delay between the times at which the transistors Q1 and Q3 are turned on. This simultaneous operation differs from the phase-shift soft switching converters known in the past in which the times differ at which transistors Q1 and Q3 are turned on by a delay determined by the phase difference.

[0031] In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the time period during which the transistor Q3 remains on is based on PWM. The length of the energy transfer stage is determined by the width of the pulse (indicated in Fig. 3 by arrow 52) in the waveform Vgs3. The width of the pulse in waveform Vgs3 is extended as the amount of energy increases which should be transferred to the load as determined by the control circuit 15. For example, if the output voltage Vout starts to sag, the control circuit 15 extends the width of waveform Vgs3 to transfer more energy to the load.

[0032] In the preferred embodiment, the leading leg 20, which comprises transistors Q1 and Q2, is operated at a duty cycle nominally of 50%, with a small dead time provided in which neither transistor Q1 nor transistor Q2 is turned on (as indicated in Fig. 3 by arrows 54 and 55). The trailing leg 22, which comprises transistors Q3 and Q4, is controlled with pulsed width modulated switching signals to provide control over the output voltage Vout. In particular, the times during which transistor Q3 is turned on (during the first half cycle) and transistor Q4 is turned on (during the second half cycle) are varied by adjusting the width of the switching pulses in the waveforms Vgs3 and Vgs4 in order to adjust the output voltage of the converter 10 to a predetermined level. Thus, the length of the first energy transfer stage (of the first half cycle) varies with the width of the pulse in waveform Vgs3. The control circuit 15 determines when to turn off transistor Q3 by evaluating the feedback level of the output voltage Vout. Although transistor Q1 and transistor Q3 are turned on at the same time, transistor Q3 stays on for a variable amount of time.

[0033] Next, a trailing leg transition stage is described in connection with Figs. 2B and 3. The trailing leg transition stage is initiated when the control circuit 15 ends the energy transfer stage by turning off transistor Q3 while maintaining transistor Q1 in a conductive state. The time interval associated with the trailing leg transition stage is indicated in Fig. 3 at time interval T2. During the trailing leg transistor time interval T2, current continues to flow in the direction shown by the arrows 50 and 56 in Fig. 2B due to the current previously built up in the magnetizing inductance 48 in the transformer 13 during the energy transfer stage (stage 1) (discussed above in connection with Fig. 2A). The current flow maintained by inductance 48 charges capacitor C3 to nearly the input voltage Vin. When the capacitor C3 is charged to approximately Vin, the voltage across the transformer primary winding 24 is approximately equal to zero since transistor Q1 remains on and the full input voltage Vin is now present on both sides of the transformer primary winding 24. When the voltage potential across capacitor C3 is slightly higher than the voltage Vin, diode D4 becomes forward biased and enters a conductive state, thereby beginning a free-wheeling stage (stage 3, discussed below in connection with Fig. 2C).

[0034] Still referring to Fig. 2B, on the secondary side 14, during the trailing leg transition stage T2 the voltage at the transformer secondary winding 26 also falls to approximately zero as the voltage across the transformer primary winding 24 approaches zero. Diode D5 begins to turn off and enters a reverse recovery period as the voltage across the rectifier 32 is reduced. However, the load current is diverted to the free wheeling diode D9, before D5 is turned off. That is, D5 is switched when zero current is flowing through it (zero-current switching). Saturable reactor SR1 comes out of saturation during the transition. The saturable reactor SR1 operates with a large impedance when not in a saturation state. Thus, while in a non-saturated state, the impedance of the saturable reactor SR1 severely limits the magnitude of the diode reverse current and therefore reduces the associated power loss.

[0035] Furthermore, the impedance of the saturable reactor SR1 limits the voltage and current across the diode and thus reduces the amount of electromagnetic interference generated when the diode D5 is turned off and lowers the physical stress on the diode D5. Thus, the diodes, like the switching transistors, are soft switched. Because the voltage across the secondary winding 26 approaches zero, the secondary winding 26 appears as a short circuit between the cathodes of diodes D7 and

D8 and the anodes of diodes D5 and D6. During this short circuit period, the saturable reactors SR1 and SR2 block current flow through the load and back through the secondary winding 26, thereby ensuring that the entire magnetizing energy is available for use by the primary side to do soft switching. Finally, when the transformer secondary winding 26 output voltage falls sufficiently, it causes the free-wheeling diode D9 to begin conducting a load current in order that current may flow along the path indicated by arrow 57.

[0036] Next, the free-wheeling stage is described in connection with Figs. 2C and 3. During the free-wheeling stage, transistor Q1 remains in an on state, and transistor Q3 remains in an off state. Referring to Fig. 3, the time interval T3 identifies the free-wheeling stage. The free-wheeling stage begins (and the trailing leg transition leg ends) when the voltage on capacitor C3 rises to the point where diode D4 turns on and clamps the voltage on capacitor C3 to the source voltage Vin plus one diode drop. By way of example, the diode drop may equal 0.7 volts, but will vary depending upon the type of diode used. The magnetizing inductance 48 continues to maintain current in a circulating loop through transistor Q1, the primary winding 24, diode D4, and back to transistor Q1 as denoted by arrows 56 and 58. The circulating loop continues during a period known as the free-wheeling period. Since the magnetizing inductance 48 is typically large, only a small amount of current is needed to sustain the current circulation. The voltage across the transformer primary winding 24 is approximately zero. Even though diode D4 is conducting, the control circuit 15 does not turn on transistor Q4.

[0037] On the secondary side 14, the voltage across the transformer secondary winding 26 also approaches zero. The inductor 36 of the filter 34 continues to provide a current to the output load, thereby keeping Vout approximately constant. Saturable reactor SR1, saturated earlier, remains reverse blocking, while saturable reactor SR2 is about to enter a forward blocking state during the free-wheeling period by transitioning from a high impedance state- to a low impedance forward conducting state while diode D9 continues to free wheel.

[0038] Next, part one of a leading leg transition stage (stage 4) is described in connection with Figs. 2D and 3. The control circuit 15 initiates part one of the leading leg transition stage by turning transistor Q1 off based on a predetermined converter operating frequency. Referring to Fig. 3, the time interval T4 represents the duration of part one of the leading leg transition stage. The magnetizing inductance 48 maintains current flow in the direction indicated by arrows 60-66 in Fig. 2D. Current flow through capacitor C1 is in the direction of arrow 64 even though the transistor Q1 is turned off. The inductive current flow maintained by inductance 48 decreases the voltage across capacitor C2 to approximately zero. As the voltage across capacitor C2 falls, the voltage across the transformer primary winding 24 begins to build (as shown at Vpr in Fig. 3). During part one of the leading leg transition stage, the polarity of voltage Vpr is opposite to the polarity of voltage Vpr during the energy transfer stage. The voltage on capacitor C2 continues to fall until diode D2 starts conducting, thereby clamping the voltage on capacitor C2 to the negative input voltage minus one diode drop (e.g., 0.7 volts). Now that the voltage across transistor Q2 is virtually zero, it is ready to be turned on under soft switching conditions. Note that even though diode D2 is conducting, the control circuit 15 maintains transistor Q2 in an off state.

[0039] On the secondary side 14, when the voltage across the transformer secondary winding 26 begins to build, current flow is established from the transformer secondary winding 26 through the saturable reactor SR2 (which saturates accordingly), through diode D6, the output filter 34, the load, diode D8 and back to the transformer secondary winding 26 (as indicated by arrows 68 and 70). Diode D9 stops free wheeling when the bridge rectifier 32 output voltage rises high enough to reverse bias the diode D9. Current ceases to flow through D9 and begins to flow through D6. The leading leg transition time is approximately the same as the trailing leg transition time since the energy stored in the magnetizing inductance 48 is substantially the same in both cases. The relatively symmetrical transition times of the trailing leg and part one of the leading leg provide another advantage over the prior art by allowing the control circuit 15 to soft switch under light loads.

[0040] Next, part two of the leading leg transition stage is discussed in connection with Figs. 2E and 3. Rather than transitioning to a stage when transistors Q4 and Q2 are directly turned on, the control circuit 15 continues to hold transistors Q4 and Q2 off for a period of time. Referring to Fig. 3, part two of the leading leg transition stage is indicated at time interval T5. The magnetizing inductance 48 maintains the load current by forcing current flow through diodes D4 and D2. During part two of the leading leg transition time interval T5, current flows through source Vin, diode D2, primary winding 24, diode D4, and back to the source Vin (as illustrated by arrows 72, 74, and 76). Hence, Q2 and Q4 are ready to turn on at zero voltage.

[0041] At the end of part two of the leading leg transition stage, the control circuit 15 initiates a transition to the second energy transfer stage. Recall that transistor Q4 was not turned on during the free-wheeling stage (time interval T3). The control circuit 15 waits to turn on transistor Q4 until the control circuit 15 is also ready to turn on transistor Q2 since current is already flowing through diode D4 Thus, no phase-shift is necessary (which would have been the case if transistor Q4 was turned on earlier than transistor Q2), and transistors Q2 and Q4 can be turned on simultaneously. As a result, the control circuit 15 can eliminate previously required phase-shift control signals and use PWM control over transistor Q4 (by adjusting the width of the waveform Vgs4 pulse) to adjust the output voltage while maintaining soft switching.

[0042] Turning to the secondary side 14, the load cur-

rent continues to flow through the transformer secondary winding 26, the saturable reactor SR2, diode D6, the output filter 34, the load, diode D8 and back to the transformer secondary winding 26 (as illustrated by arrows 78 and 80).

[0043] The above description concludes the first half cycle during which current flow in a first direction was initiated and ended through the primary winding 24.

[0044] Next the converter 10 continues through a second half cycle. The operation of the converter 10 during the second half cycle is symmetrical to the operation of the converter 10 during the first half cycle. For example, transistor Q4 is operated under PWM control in the same manner as transistor Q3 was in the first half cycle. An independent PWM control signal, shown as Vgs4 in Fig. 3 controls transistor Q4, however.

[0045] The first stage of the second half cycle the energy transfer stage, is described in connection with Figs. 2F and 3. The second energy transfer stage begins when transistors Q4 and Q2 are both simultaneously switched on by the control circuit 15. Referring to Fig. 3, the second energy transfer stage is indicated at time interval T6. Because both diode D4 and diode D2 were conducting prior to the beginning of the second energy transfer stage, transistors Q4 and Q2 are turned on with a voltage potential thereacross substantially corresponding to the diode voltage drop (e.g., 0.7 volts) across diodes D4 and D2. In other words, transistors Q4 and Q2 are soft switched, in a manner identical to the soft switching technique utilized above in connection with the first energy transfer stage for transistors Q1 and Q3. The input power supply Vin transfers energy to the transformer primary winding 24 in a direction reverse to the direction of energy transfer during the first energy transfer stage (described above in connection with Fig. 2A). The polarity of the voltage applied across the primary winding 24 during the second energy transfer stage is opposite to the polarity of the voltage applied across the primary winding 24 during the first energy transfer stage when transistors Q1 and Q3 were on.

[0046] Current flows through transistor Q4 and magnetizing inductance 48, thereby again building up current in the inductance 48, but in an opposite direction, see arrow 84. The current built up in the inductance 48 will be used in subsequent free wheeling and leading leg transition stages as described above in connection with Figs. 2D and 2C. The current continues to flow through transistor Q2 back to source Vin (as illustrated by arrows 82, 84 and 86). Both capacitor C1 and capacitor C3 change to the input voltage Vin during the second energy transfer stage.

[0047] On the secondary side 14, a voltage develops across the transformer secondary winding 26 that is a function of the turns ratio of the transformer 13. The voltage potential across-the transformer secondary winding 26 has a polarity that is opposed to the polarity of the voltage developed across secondary winding 26 during the first energy transfer stage (described above in connection with Fig. 2A). Current on the secondary side 14 flows through saturable reactor SR2, diode D6, the output filter 34, the load, then back to diode D8 to the secondary winding 26 (as illustrated by arrows 88 and 90). Diodes D5 and D7 are reverse biased and are fully in their reverse blocking state during the second energy transfer stage. The current flow through saturable reactor SR2 forces the saturable reactor SR2 into a saturation stage, during which minimum power is dissipated across the saturable reactor SR2 as it acts as a virtual short circuit while current is flowing therethrough. The output of the diode bridge rectifier 32 forces the free-wheeling diode D9 into an off state.

[0048] The rest of this half cycle is symmetrical to that of the first cycle. Detailed description is hence omitted.

[0049] The converter 10 continues operating through the second half cycle in a manner symmetrical, to that of the first half cycle. A detailed description of the second half cycle is therefore contained in the description of the first half cycle, except that symmetric circuit components should be substituted. In other words, in the second half cycle, the above-described operation of Q3 applies now to the operation of Q4 and vice versa; the above-described operation of diodes D1 and D3 applies to the operation of diodes D2 and D4 and vice versa, etc. Once the second half cycle is complete, the converter 10 continues operation in the first half cycle once again.

[0050] Fig. 4- illustrates the measured efficiency of a converter 10 as described above. Fig. 4 shows the best efficiency to be approximately 94% The efficiency of the converter 10 varies a little with the load current. Fig. 4, however, only reflects a set of measurements and does not depict a ceiling on the possible converter efficiency. Rather, the efficiency may continue to increase as further refinements are made to the converter.

[0051] Fig. 5 illustrates an alternative embodiment in which a multiple converter configuration is utilized including two converters 100 and 200 operating with their primary sides 112 and 212 in parallel and their secondary sides 114 and 214 in series. This concept can be generalized to multiple converter configurations using any number of converters 10.

[0052] The configuration shown in Fig. 5 has a wide variety of applications. In aerospace applications, for example, the demand for power is increasing rapidly due to the ever-increasing functionality and complexity required in spacecraft electronic systems. Power supplies rated at a few kilowatts are frequently needed to provide power from a 28V DC bus. Delivering high power at 28V DC requires the power supply to handle large current. To this end, parallel connection of the primary side 12 of individual converters 10 is an effective approach.

[0053] On the other hand, high output voltage is also frequently required for electric propulsion apparatus. To this end, a series connection of the secondary sides 14 of individual converters 10 can generate large output voltages. Therefore, a parallel/series connection of identical converters 10 represents an effective approach for elec-

tric propulsion.

[0054] Each of converters 100 and 200 individually operates as described above in connection with converter 10. To simplify the explanation of the alternative embodiment, similar elements have been given similar reference numbers, but incremented by 100 or 200, respectively. For instance the leading and trailing legs 20 and 22 of Fig. 1 have been renumbered as leading and trailing legs 120 and 122 in converter 100 and as leading and trailing legs 220 and 222 in converter 200. In addition, elements in converter 10 labelled with a letter followed by a single digit number (e.g., Q1, D4, C3) are relabeled in converters 100 and 200 with the same letter followed by a 2 digit number. Thus, gates G1-G4 of Fig. 1 have been renumbered as gates G11-G14 in the converter 100 and as gates G21-G24 in the converter 200. The explanation of elements which operate in the manner described above in connection with Fig. 1 are not described in detail hereafter.

[0055] In the embodiment of Fig. 5, the converters 100 and 200 may be controlled by a common control circuit 115 through PWM switching signals connected to gates G11-G14 and G21-G24. The control circuit 115 phase staggers or delays the PWM switching signals supplied to gates G21-G24 relative to the PWM switching signals supplied to gates G11-G14. Optionally, the PWM switching signals of the upper converter 100 may be phase staggered from the lower converter 200 by approximately 90 degrees in order that the dual configuration converter allows only one of converters 100 and 200 to draw input current at any instant in time. By staggering the control operations, the size, weight and cost of the input filters may be reduced since the filters need not handle as large amounts of ripple current caused when two converters operate simultaneously. The output voltage Vout in Fig. 5 may be twice the voltage produced by an individual converter. The diodes D15-D18 and D25-D28 on the secondary sides 114 and 214 of the transformers 113 and 213 need only handle half of the intended output voltage. This leads to a converter that may use faster, smaller, lighter and less expensive diodes.

Claims

1. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) comprising:

   a DC input voltage source (16);
   a transformer (13) with primary and secondary windings (24, 26), said primary winding (24) including a magnetizing inductance (48) connected in parallel therewith;
   a switching circuit (12) for coupling said DC input voltage to said transformer primary winding (24), said switching circuit comprising a first pair of switching devices (20) connected in parallel with said DC input voltage (16) and a second pair of switching devices (22) connected in parallel with said DC input voltage (16) and said first pair of switching devices (20), said switching devices (20, 22) selectively turning on and off to convert said DC input voltage (16) to an approximately square wave voltage which is supplied to said primary winding (24) of said transformer (13);
   a rectifying circuit (32) connected to said transformer secondary winding (26) for rectifying an output voltage of said transformer secondary winding (26), said rectifying circuit (32) comprising first and second legs having first and second saturable reactors (SR1, SR2) connected in series with first and second diodes (D5, D6), respectively, said first and second saturable reactors (SR1, SR2) blocking current flow in said transformer secondary winding (26) when said first and second diodes (D5, D6) are in reverse recovery states and when said transformer secondary winding (26) is in a short circuit state; and
   a control circuit (15) connected to an output terminal (Vout) of said converter (10) and connected to said switching devices, said control circuit (15) for generating pulse width modulated (PWM) switching signals turning said switching devices (20, 22) on and off, said control circuit (15) turning on simultaneously a first switching device (Q1) in said first pair (20) and a third switching device (Q3) in said second pair (22) at a beginning of an energy transfer stage, said energy transfer stage corresponding to a time period during which said third switching device (Q3) remains on, said control circuit (15) detecting a voltage level at said output terminal (Vout)
   characterized in that
   said control circuit (15) varies a pulse width of a PWM switching signal that controls said third switching device (Q3) to vary a time period during which said third switching device (Q3) remains on based on said voltage level at said output terminal (Vout), and
   said control circuit (15) maintains said first switching device (Q1) in an on state to achieve soft switching after turning said third switching device (Q3) to an off state for a sufficient period of time.

2. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, comprising
   a free wheeling diode (D9) connected in parallel with output terminals of said rectifying circuit (32).

3. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, comprising
   a filter circuit (34) connected in parallel with output terminals of said rectifying circuit (32) for performing low pass filtering upon an output of said rectifying circuit (32).

4. A pulse modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, wherein
said control circuit (15) includes a programmable microcontroller for detecting said voltage level at said output terminal (Vout) and for controlling pulse widths of said PWM switching signals to control soft switching operations of said first and second pairs of switching devices (20, 22).

5. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, wherein
said control circuit (15) ends the energy transfer stage by turning off said third switching device (Q3) in said second pair (22), and
said control circuit (15) initiates a trailing leg transition stage when turning off said third switching device (Q3).

6. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 5, wherein
said control circuit (15) maintains said trailing leg transition stage from a time at which said third switching device (Q3) is turned off until a time at which a capacitance of said third switching device (Q3) approximately equals said DC input voltage (16) and a voltage potential across said primary winding (24) approximates a substantial minimum voltage.

7. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, wherein
said second pair of switching devices (22) includes said third and a fourth switching device (Q3, Q4), each of which containing corresponding third and fourth parasitic diodes (D3, D4), said fourth parasitic diode (D4) becoming forward biased and entering a conducted stage after said control circuit (15) turns off said third switching device (Q3) thereby initiating a free-wheeling stage during which current flows through said first switching device (Q1), through said primary winding (22), through said fourth parasitic diode (D4) and back through said first switching device (Q1).

8. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10), according to claim 1, wherein
said first and second pairs (20, 22) of switching devices comprise a second switching device (Q2) and a fourth switching device (Q4), respectively, each of which including a parasitic capacitance (C1, C2, C3, C4) and diode (D1, D2, D3, D4),
said control circuit (15) initiates part one of a leading leg transition stage by turning said first switching device (Q1) off based on a predefined switching frequency during part one of said leading leg transition stage, and
said inductance (48) of said primary winding (24) drives current flow through said parasitic diode (D4) of said fourth switching device (Q4), through said DC input voltage source (16) and through said parasitic diodes (D1, D2) of said first and second switching devices (Q1, Q2) in opposite directions, said current returning to said primary winding (24), and
said capacitance (C1) of said first switching device (Q1) supplements current flow through said diode (D1) of said first switching device (Q1), wherein inductive current flow driven by said inductance (48) of said primary winding (24) decreases a voltage potential across said capacitor (C2) of said second switching device (Q2) to approximately zero, thereby building a voltage potential across said primary winding (24) to equal substantially said DC input voltage (16), said part one of said leading leg transition stage ending when a voltage potential across said capacitance (C2) of said second switching device (Q2) falls until said diode (D2) of said second switching device (Q2) becomes conductive, thereby clamping said diode (D2) of said second switching device (Q2) at a minimum predetermined voltage.

9. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, wherein
said first and second pairs (20, 22) of switching devices include a second switching device (Q2) and a fourth switching device (Q4), respectively,
said control circuit (15) maintains said second and fourth switching device (Q2, Q4) off throughout parts one and two of a leading leg transition stage corresponding to the time period during which current reverses a direction of flow through said primary winding (24), and
said control circuit (15) turns on said second and fourth switching devices (Q2, Q4) simultaneously to initiate a second energy transfer stage following said parts one and two of said leading leg transition stage.

10. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, wherein
said first pair of switching devices (20) includes a second switching device (Q2) and said second pair of switching devices (22) includes a fourth switching device (Q4),
said control circuit (15) for simultaneously turns on said first and third switching devices (Q1, Q3) to initiate an energy transfer stage of a first half cycle,
said control circuit (15) simultaneously turns on said second and fourth switching devices (Q2, Q4) during an energy transfer stage of a second half cycle, and
said control circuit (15) ends said energy transfer stages of said first and second half cycles by turning off said third and fourth switching devices (Q3, Q4), respectively, while maintaining on said first and second switching devices (Q1, Q2), respectively.

11. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, comprising
a capacitor (18) connected in parallel with said DC

input voltage (16) for smoothing said input voltage.

12. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10), according to claim 1, wherein
said first pair of switching devices (20) includes said first and a second switching device (Q1, Q2) connected in series via a first node (28),
said second pair of switching devices (22) includes said third and a fourth switching device (Q3, Q4) connected in series via a second node (30), and
said primary winding (24) of said transformer (13) is connected in series with said first and second nodes (28, 30) such that current flows in a first direction through said primary winding (24) when the first and third switching devices (Q1, Q3) are on and such that current flows in a second opposite direction through said primary winding (24) when said second and fourth switching devices (Q2, Q4) are turned on.

13. A pulse width modulated soft switching DC-to-DC converter (10) according to claim 1, wherein
said rectifying circuit (32) includes at least said first and second saturable reactors (SR1, SR2) connected in series with at least said first and second diodes (D5, D6), said saturable reactors (SR1, SR2) acting as short circuits while current flow therethrough, said saturable reactors (SR1, SR2) exhibiting high impedance characteristics when in an unsaturated state while no or a minimum current flows therethrough, thereby preventing energy loss associated with diode reverse recovery.

Patentansprüche

1. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) mit:

einer Gleichspannungseingangsspannungsquelle (16);
einem Transformator (13) mit Primär- und Sekundärwicklungen (24, 26), wobei die Primärwicklung (24) eine mit dieser parallel verbundene, magnetisierende Induktivität (48) aufweist;
einem schaltenden Schaltkreis (12), um die Gleichspannungseingangsspannung mit der Transformatorprimärwicklung (24) zu koppeln, wobei der schaltende Schaltkreis ein erstes Paar von Schaltvorrichtungen (20), die parallel mit der Gleichspannungseingangsspannung (16) verbunden sind, und ein zweites Paar von Schaltvorrichtungen (22) umfasst, die parallel mit der Gleichspannungseingangsspannung (16) und dem ersten Paar Schaltvorrichtungen (20) verbunden sind, wobei die Schaltvorrichtungen (20, 22) selektiv ein- und ausschalten, um die Gleichspannungseingangsspannung (16) näherungsweise in eine Rechteckspannung umzuwandeln, die der Primärwicklung (24) des Transformators (13) zugeführt wird;
einem Gleichrichterschaltkreis (32), der mit der Transformatorsekundärwicklung (26) verbunden ist, um eine Ausgangsspannung der Transformatorsekundärwicklung (26) gleichzurichten, wobei der Gleichrichterschaltkreis (32) erste und zweite Zweige umfasst, die erste und zweite Sättigungsdrosseln (SR1, SR2) aufweisen, die mit ersten bzw. zweiten Dioden (D5, D6) in Reihe verbunden sind, wobei die ersten und zweiten Sättigungsdrosseln (SR1, SR2) Stromfluss in der Transformatorsekundärwicklung (26) blockieren, wenn sich die ersten und zweiten Dioden (D5, D6) in Sperrverzögerungszuständen befinden und wenn sich die Transformatorsekundärwicklung (26) in einem Kurzschlusszustand befindet; und
einem Steuerschaltkreis (15), der mit einem Ausgangsanschluss (Vout) des Wandlers (10) verbunden ist und mit den Schaltvorrichtungen verbunden ist, wobei der Steuerschaltkreis (15) zum Erzeugen von pulsbreitenmodulierten (PWM) Schaltsignalen die Schaltvorrichtungen (20, 22) ein- und ausschaltet, wobei der Steuerschaltkreis (15) eine erste Schaltvorrichtung (Q1) in dem ersten Paar (20) und eine dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) in dem zweiten Paar (22) am Beginn einer Energieübertragungsstufe gleichzeitig einschaltet, wobei die Energieübertragungsstufe einer Zeitdauer entspricht, während der die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) eingeschaltet bleibt, wobei der Steuerschaltkreis (15) einen Spannungspegel an dem Ausgangsanschluss (Vout) detektiert;
dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) eine Pulsbreite eines PWM-Schaltsignals, das die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) steuert, variiert, um eine Zeitdauer zu variieren, während der die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) eingeschaltet bleibt, basierend auf dem Spannungspegel an dem Ausgangsanschluss (Vout); und
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die erste Schaltvorrichtung (Q1) in einem eingeschalteten Zustand hält, um ein weiches Schalten zu erreichen, nachdem die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) für eine ausreichende Zeitdauer in einem ausgeschalteten Zustand gebracht ist.

2. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, mit
einer Freilaufdiode (D9), die parallel zu Ausgangsanschlüssen des Gleichrichterschaltkreises (32) angeschlossen ist.

3. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleich-

strom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, mit
einem Filterschaltkreis (34), der parallel zu Ausgangsanschlüssen des Gleichrichterschaltkreises (32) angeschlossen ist, um eine Tiefpassfilterung einer Ausgabe des Gleichrichterschaltkreises (32) durchzuführen.

4. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) einen programmierbaren Mikrokontroller umfasst, um den Spannungspegel an dem Ausgangsanschluss (Vout) zu detektieren und Pulsbreiten der PWM-Schaltsignale zu steuern, um weich schaltende Operationen der ersten und zweiten Paare von Schaltvorrichtungen (20, 22) zu steuern.

5. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die Energieübertragungsstufe beendet, indem die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) in dem zweiten Paar (22) abgeschaltet wird, und
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) eine Übergangsstufe für den nachlaufenden Zweig einleitet, wenn die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) abgeschaltet wird.

6. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 5, bei dem
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die Übergangsstufe des nacheilenden Zweigs ausgehend von einem Zeitpunkt, an dem die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) abgeschaltet wird, bis zu einem Zeitpunkt aufrecht erhält, an dem eine Kapazität der dritten Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) näherungsweise der Gleichspannungseingangsspannung (16) entspricht und ein Spannungspotential über der Primärwicklung (24) sich einer im Wesentlichen minimalen Spannung annähert.

7. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
das zweite Paar von Schaltvorrichtungen (22) die dritte und eine vierte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3, Q4) aufweist, von denen jede entsprechende dritte und vierte parasitäre Dioden (D3, D4) enthält, wobei die vierte parasitäre Diode (D4) in Durchlassrichtung vorgespannt wird und einen leitenden Zustand einnimmt, nachdem der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die dritte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3) abschaltet, wobei dadurch eine Freilaufzustand eingeleitet wird, während dem Strom durch die erste Schaltvorrichtung (Q1), durch die Primärwicklung (22), durch die vierte parasitäre Diode (D4) und zurück durch die erste Schaltvorrichtung (Q1) fließt.

8. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
die ersten und zweiten Paare (20, 22) von Schaltvorrichtungen eine zweite Schaltvorrichtung (Q2) bzw. eine vierte Schaltvorrichtung (Q4) umfassen, von denen jede eine parasitäre Kapazität (C1, C2, C3, C4) und eine Diode (D1, D2, D3, D4) aufweist,
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) einen Teil Eins einer Übergangstufe des vorauseilenden Zweigs einleitet, indem die erste Schaltvorrichtung (Q1) basierend auf einer vordefinierten Schaltfrequenz während des Teils Eins der Übergangsstufe des vorauseilenden Zweigs abgeschaltet wird, und
die Induktivität (48) der Primärwicklung (24) einen Stromfluss durch die parasitäre Diode (D4) der vierten Schaltvorrichtung (Q4), durch die Gleichspannungseingangsspannungsquelle (16) und durch die parasitären Dioden (D1, D2) der ersten und zweiten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q1, Q2) in entgegengesetzten Richtungen steuert, wobei der Strom zu der Primärwicklung (24) zurückkehrt, und
die Kapazität (C1) der ersten Schaltvorrichtung (Q1) einen Stromfluss durch die Diode (D1) der ersten Schaltvorrichtung (Q1) ergänzt, wobei ein durch die Induktivität (48) der Primärwicklung (24) gesteuerter, induktiver Stromfluss ein Spannungspotential über der Kapazität (C2) der zweiten Schaltvorrichtung (Q2) auf näherungsweise Null absenkt, wodurch ein Spannungspotential über der Primärwicklung (24) aufgebaut wird, das im Wesentlichen der Gleichspannungseingangsspannung (16) entspricht, wobei der Teil Eins der Übergangsstufe des vorauseilenden Zweigs endet, wenn ein Spannungspotential über der Kapazität (C2) der zweiten Schaltvorrichtung (Q2) abfällt, bis die Diode (D2) der zweiten Schaltvorrichtung (Q2) leitfähig wird, wodurch die Diode (D2) der zweiten Schaltvorrichtung (Q2) auf eine minimale vorbestimmte Spannung festgelegt wird.

9. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
die ersten und zweiten Paare (20, 22) von Schaltvorrichtungen eine zweite Schaltvorrichtung (Q2) bzw. eine vierte Schaltvorrichtung (Q4) aufweisen,
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die zweiten und vierten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q2, Q4) während den Teilen Eins und Zwei einer Übergangsstufe des vorauseilenden Zweigs ausgeschaltet hält, die der Zeitdauer entspricht, während der ein Strom eine Flussrichtung durch die Primärwicklung (24) umkehrt, und
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die zweiten und vierten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q2, Q4) gleichzeitig einschaltet, um eine zweite Energieübertragungsstufe ein-

zuleiten, die den Teilen Eins und Zwei der Übergangsstufe des vorauseilenden Zweigs folgt.

10. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
das erste Paar von Schaltvorrichtungen (20) eine zweite Schaltvorrichtung (Q2) aufweist und das zweite Paar von Schaltvorrichtungen (22) eine vierte Schaltvorrichtung (Q4) aufweist,
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die ersten und dritten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q1, Q3) gleichzeitig einschaltet, um eine Energieübertragungsstufe eines ersten Halbzyklus' einzuleiten,
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) gleichzeitig die zweiten und vierten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q2, Q4) während einer Energieübertragungsstufe eines zweiten Halbzyklus' gleichzeitig einschaltet, und
der Steuerschaltkreis (15) die Energieübertragungsstufen der ersten und zweiten Halbzyklen beendet, indem die dritten bzw. vierten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q3, Q4) abgeschaltet werden, während die ersten bzw. zweiten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q1, Q2) eingeschaltet bleiben.

11. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, mit
einer Kapazität (18), die zum Glätten der Eingangsspannung parallel mit der Gleichspannungseingangsspannung (16) verbunden ist.

12. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
das erste Paar von Schaltvorrichtungen (20) erste und zweite Schaltvorrichtungen (Q1, Q2) aufweist, die über einen ersten Knoten (28) in Reihe angeschlossen sind,
das zweite Paar von Schaltvorrichtungen (22) die dritte und eine vierte Schaltvorrichtung (Q3, Q4) aufweist, die über einen zweiten Knoten (30) in Reihe angeschlossen sind, und
die Primärwicklung (24) des Transformators (13) in Reihe mit den ersten und zweiten Knoten (28, 30) verbunden ist, so dass ein Strom in einer ersten Richtung durch die Primärwicklung (24) fließt, wenn die ersten und dritten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q1, Q3) eingeschaltet sind, und so dass ein Strom in einer zweiten, entgegengesetzten Richtung durch die Primärwicklung (24) fließt, wenn die zweiten und vierten Schaltvorrichtungen (Q2, Q4) eingeschaltet sind.

13. Pulsbreitenmodulierter, weich schaltender Gleichstrom-Gleichstrom-Wandler (10) gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem
der Gleichrichterschaltkreis (32) wenigstens die ersten und zweiten Sättigungsdrosseln (SR1, SR2) aufweist, die in Reihe mit wenigstens den ersten und zweiten Dioden (D5, D6) angeschlossen sind, wobei die Sättigungsdrosseln (SR1, SR2) als Kurzschlüsse dienen, während durch diese Strom hindurch fließt, wobei die Sättigungsdrosseln (SR1, SR2) eine Charakteristik hoher Impedanz aufweisen, wenn sie sich in einem nicht gesättigten Zustand befinden, während dem kein oder ein minimaler Strom durch diese hindurch fließt, wodurch ein mit einer Diodensperrverzögerung verbundener Energieverlust verhindert wird.

Revendications

1. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce, comprenant :

une source de tension continue d'entrée (16);
un transformateur (13) avec des enroulements primaire et secondaire (24, 26), ledit enroulement primaire (24) incluant une inductance magnétisante (48) connectée en parallèle sur celui-ci ;
un circuit de commutation (12) pour coupler ladite tension continue d'entrée audit enroulement primaire (24) du transformateur, ledit circuit de commutation comprenant une première paire de dispositifs de commutation (20) connectés en parallèle sur ladite tension continue d'entrée (16) et une deuxième paire de dispositifs de commutation (22) connectés en parallèle sur ladite tension continue d'entrée (16) et ladite première paire de dispositifs de commutation (20), lesdits dispositifs de commutation (20, 22) étant activés et désactivés de manière sélective pour convertir ladite tension continue d'entrée (16) en une tension d'onde approximativement carrée qui est délivrée audit enroulement primaire (24) dudit transformateur (13) ;
un circuit de redressement (32) connecté audit enroulement secondaire (26) du transformateur pour redresser une tension de sortie dudit enroulement secondaire (26) du transformateur, ledit circuit de redressement (32) comprenant une première et une deuxième branches ayant une première et une deuxième bobines de réactance saturables (SR1, SR2) connectées en série sur une première et une deuxième diodes (D5, D6), respectivement, lesdites première et deuxième bobines de réactance saturables (SR1, SR2) bloquant la circulation du courant dans ledit enroulement secondaire du transformateur (26) lorsque lesdites première et deuxième diodes (D5, D6) sont dans des états de recouvrement inverse et lorsque ledit enroulement secondaire du transformateur (26) est dans un

état de court-circuit, et
un circuit de commande (15) connecté à une borne de sortie (Vout) dudit convertisseur (10) et connecté auxdits dispositifs de commutation, ledit circuit de commande (15) pour générer des signaux de commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions (Pulse Width Modulated PWM) activant et désactivant lesdits dispositifs de commutation (20, 22), ledit circuit de commande (15) activant simultanément un premier dispositif de commutation (Q1) dans ladite première paire (20) et un troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) dans ladite deuxième paire (22) au début d'une étape de transfert d'énergie, ladite étape de transfert d'énergie correspondant à une période de temps pendant laquelle ledit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) reste actif, ledit circuit de commande (15) servant à détecter un niveau de tension au niveau de ladite borne de sortie (Vout)
caractérisé en ce que
ledit circuit de commande (15) fait varier une largeur d'impulsion d'un signal de commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions qui commande ledit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) pour faire varier une période de temps pendant laquelle ledit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) reste actif en se basant sur ledit niveau de tension au niveau de ladite borne de sortie (Vout), et
ledit commutateur de commande (15) maintient ledit premier dispositif de commutation (Q1) dans un état actif pour obtenir une commutation douce après avoir mis ledit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) dans un état inactif pendant une période de temps suffisante.

2. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, comprenant
une diode libre (D9) connectée en parallèle sur les bornes de sortie dudit circuit de redressement (32).

3. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, comprenant
un circuit filtrant (34) connecté en parallèle sur les bornes de sortie dudit circuit de redressement (32) pour effectuer un filtrage passe-bas sur une sortie dudit circuit de redressement (32).

4. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, dans lequel
ledit circuit de commande (15) inclut un micro-contrôleur programmable pour détecter ledit niveau de tension au niveau de ladite borne de sortie (Vout) et pour commander les largeurs d'impulsions desdits signaux de commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions pour commander des opérations de commutation douce desdites première et deuxième paires de dispositifs de commutation (20, 22).

5. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, dans lequel
ledit circuit de commande (15) met fin à l'étape de transfert d'énergie en désactivant ledit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) dans ladite deuxième paire (22) et
ledit circuit de commande (15) déclenche un étage de transition de branche de fin lors de la désactivation dudit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3).

6. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 5, dans lequel
ledit circuit de commande (15) maintient ledit étage de transition de branche de fin à partir d'un instant auquel ledit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) est désactivé jusqu'à un instant auquel une capacité dudit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) est approximativement égal à ladite tension continue d'entrée (16) et un potentiel de tension aux bornes dudit enroulement primaire (24) est approximativement égal à une tension minimum substantielle.

7. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, dans lequel
ladite deuxième paire de dispositifs de commutation (22) inclut lesdits troisième et quatrième dispositifs de commutation (Q3, Q4), chacun contenant une troisième et une quatrième diodes parasites (D3, D4) correspondantes, ladite quatrième diode parasite (D4) devenant polarisée dans le sens direct et passant dans un état conducteur lorsque ledit circuit de commande (15) a désactivé ledit troisième dispositif de commutation (Q3) déclenchant ainsi un état libre pendant lequel le courant circule à travers ledit premier dispositif de commutation (Q1), à travers ledit enroulement primaire (22), à travers ladite quatrième diode parasite (D4) et de retour à travers ledit premier dispositif de commutation (Q1).

8. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, dans lequel
lesdites première et deuxième paires (20, 22) de dispositifs de commutation comprennent un deuxième dispositif de commutation (Q2) et un quatrième dispositif de commutation (Q4) respectivement, chacun incluant une capacité parasite (C1, C2, C3, C4) et une diode (D1, D2, D3, D4),
ledit circuit de commande (15) sert à déclencher la partie 1 d'un étage de transition de branche de début

en désactivant ledit premier dispositif de commutation (Q1) en se basant sur une fréquence de commutation prédéfinie pendant la partie 1 dudit étage de transition de branche de début, et
ladite inductance (48) dudit enroulement primaire (24) sert à faire circuler le courant à travers ladite diode parasite (D4) dudit quatrième dispositif de commutation (Q4), à travers ladite source de tension continue d'entrée (16) et à travers lesdites diodes parasites (D1, D2) desdits premier et deuxième dispositifs de commutation (Q1, Q2) dans des sens opposés, ledit courant retournant audit enroulement primaire (24), et
ladite capacité (48) dudit premier dispositif de commutation (Q1) servant à augmenter le courant circulant à travers ladite diode (D1) dudit premier dispositif de commutation (Q1), dans lequel la circulation du courant inductif commandée par ladite inductance (48) dudit enroulement primaire (24) réduit un potentiel de tension aux bornes dudit condensateur (C2) dudit deuxième dispositif de commutation (Q2) pour être quasiment nul, créant ainsi un potentiel de tension aux bornes dudit enroulement primaire (24) essentiellement égal à ladite tension continue d'entrée (16), ladite partie 1 dudit étage de transition de branche de début se terminant lorsqu'un potentiel de tension aux bornes de ladite capacitance (C2) dudit deuxième dispositif de commutation (Q2) chute jusqu'à ce que ladite diode (D2) dudit deuxième dispositif de commutation (Q2) devienne conducteur, fixant ainsi ladite diode (D2) dudit deuxième dispositif de commutation (Q2) à une tension prédéterminée minimum.

9. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, dans lequel
lesdites première et deuxième paires (20, 22) de dispositifs de commutation comprennent un deuxième dispositif de commutation (Q2) et un quatrième dispositif de commutation (Q4) respectivement,
ledit circuit de commande (15) maintient lesdits deuxième et quatrième dispositifs de commutation (Q2, Q4) désactivés par les parties 1 et 2 d'un étage de transition de branche de début correspondant à la période de temps pendant laquelle le courant inverse un sens de la circulation à travers ledit enroulement primaire (24), et
ledit circuit de commande (15) active lesdits deuxième et quatrième dispositifs de commutation (Q2, Q4) simultanément pour déclencher une deuxième étape de transfert d'énergie suivant lesdites parties 1 et 2 dudit étage de transition de branche de début.

10. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, dans lequel
ladite première paire de dispositifs de commutation (20) inclut un deuxième dispositif de commutation (Q2) et ladite deuxième paire de dispositifs de commutation (22) inclut un quatrième dispositif de commutation (Q4),
ledit circuit de commande (15) active simultanément lesdits premier et troisième dispositifs de commutation (Q1, Q3) pour déclencher une étape de transfert d'énergie d'un premier demi-cycle,
ledit circuit de commande (15) active simultanément lesdits deuxième et quatrième dispositifs de commutation (Q2, Q4) pendant une étape de transfert d'énergie d'un deuxième demi-cycle, et
ledit circuit de commande (15) met fin auxdites étapes de transfert d'énergie desdits premier et deuxième demi-cycles en désactivant lesdits troisième et quatrième dispositifs de commutation (Q3, Q4), respectivement, tout en maintenant actifs lesdits premier et deuxième dispositifs de commutation (Q1, Q2), respectivement.

11. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, comprenant
un condensateur (18) connecté en parallèle sur ladite tension continue d'entrée (16) pour lisser ladite tension d'entrée.

12. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1, dans lequel
ladite première paire de dispositifs de commutation (20) inclut ledit premier et un deuxième dispositifs de commutation (Q1, Q2) connectés en série via un premier noeud (28),
ladite deuxième paire de dispositifs de commutation (22) inclut lesdits troisième et quatrième dispositifs de commutation (Q3, Q4) connectés en série via un deuxième noeud (30), et
ledit enroulement primaire (24) dudit transformateur (13) est connecté en série sur lesdits premier et deuxième noeuds (28, 30) de telle sorte que le courant circule dans un premier sens à travers ledit premier enroulement primaire (24) lorsque le premier et le troisième dispositifs de commutation (Q1, Q3) sont actifs et de telle sorte que le courant circule dans un deuxième sens opposé à travers ledit enroulement primaire (24) lorsque lesdits deuxième et quatrième dispositifs de commutation (Q2, Q4) sont actifs.

13. Convertisseur continu-continu (10) avec commutation à modulation de largeur d'impulsions douce selon la revendication 1,
dans lequel ledit circuit de redressement (32) inclut au moins lesdites première et deuxième bobines de réactance saturables (SR1, SR2) connectées en série sur au moins lesdites première et deuxième diodes (D5, D6), lesdites bobines de réactance satura-

bles (SR1, SR2) se comportant comme courts-circuits lorsque le courant les traverse, lesdites bobines de réactance saturables (SR1, SR2) présentant une caractéristique haute-impédance lorsqu'elles se trouvent dans un état non saturé lorsque aucun courant ou un courant minimum les traverse, empêchant les pertes d'énergie associées au recouvrement inverse des diodes.

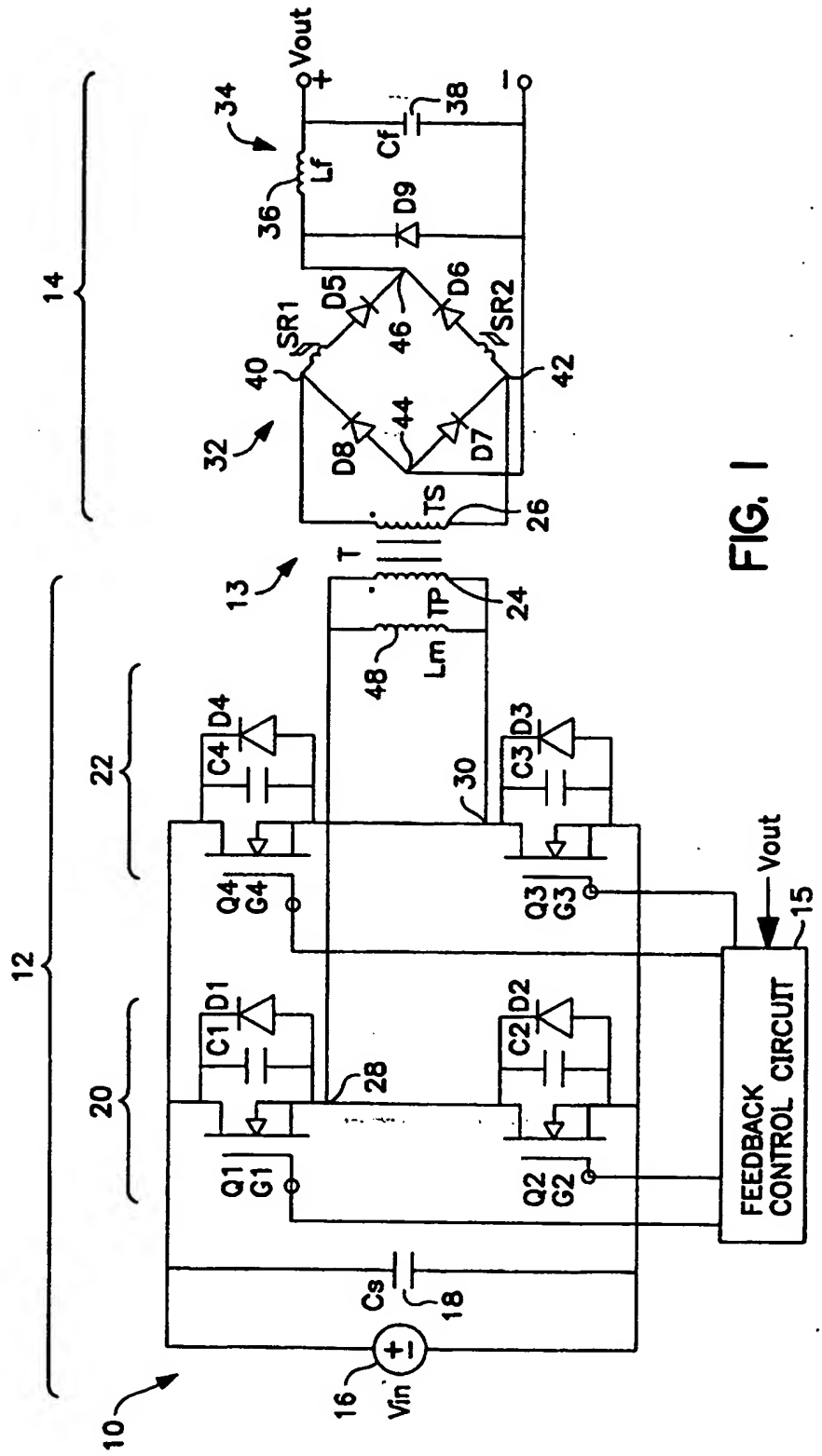
Vout
+
-
34
38
Cf
Lf
36
D9
14
D5
D6
SR1
SR2
46
40
42
44
32
D8
D7
TS
26
T
13
TP
24
48
Lm
22
D4
C4
D3
C3
30
Q4
G4
Q3
G3
Vout
15
12
D1
C1
D2
C2
20
28
Q1
G1
Q2
G2
FEEDBACK
CONTROL CIRCUIT
Cs
18
16
Vin
10

FIG. 1

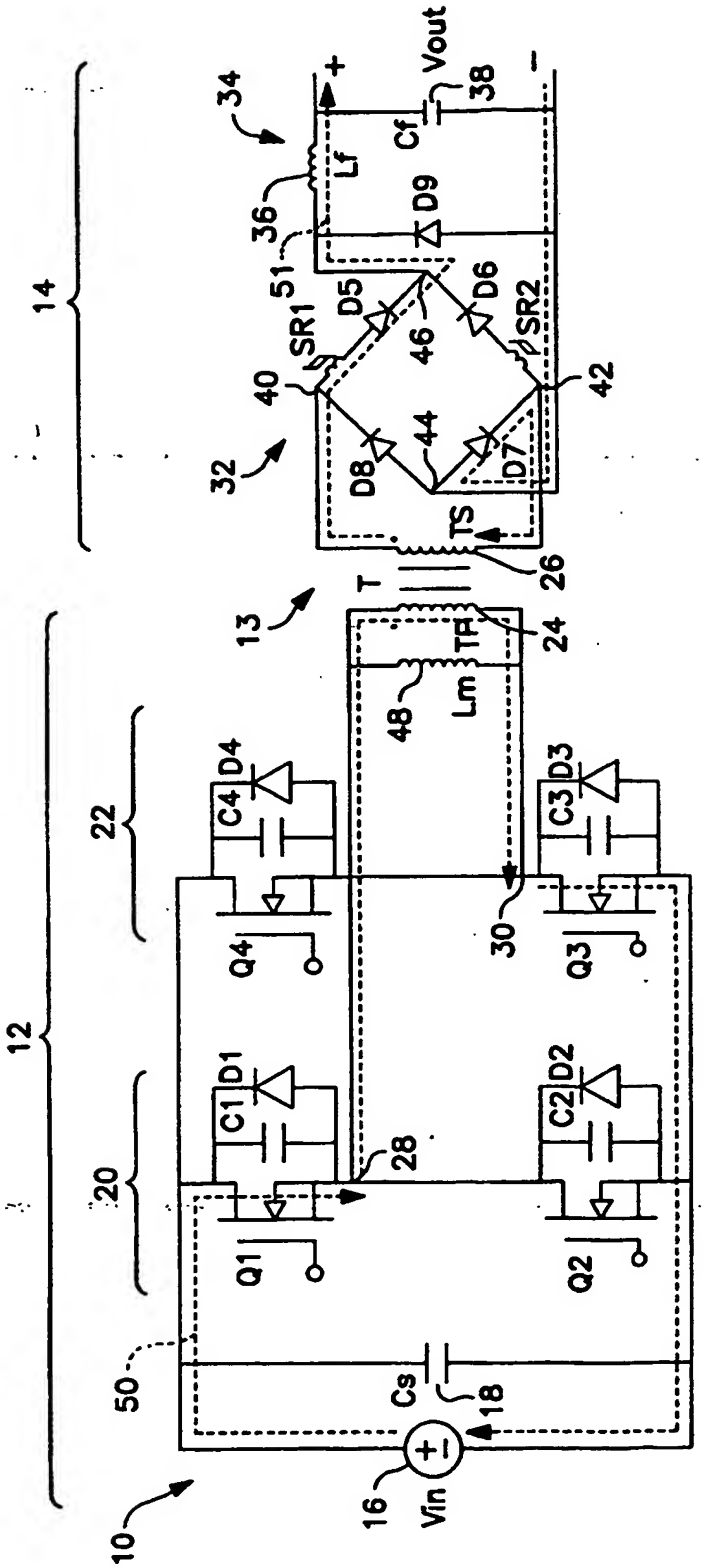
Vout
+
-
34
38
Cf
Lf
36
D9
51
D5
D6
SR1
SR2
46
40
42
44
32
D8
D7
TS
26
T
14
13
TP
24
48
Lm
22
D4
C4
D3
C3
Q4
Q3
30
12
D1
C1
D2
C2
28
20
Q1
Q2
50
Cs
18
16
Vin
10

FIG. 2A

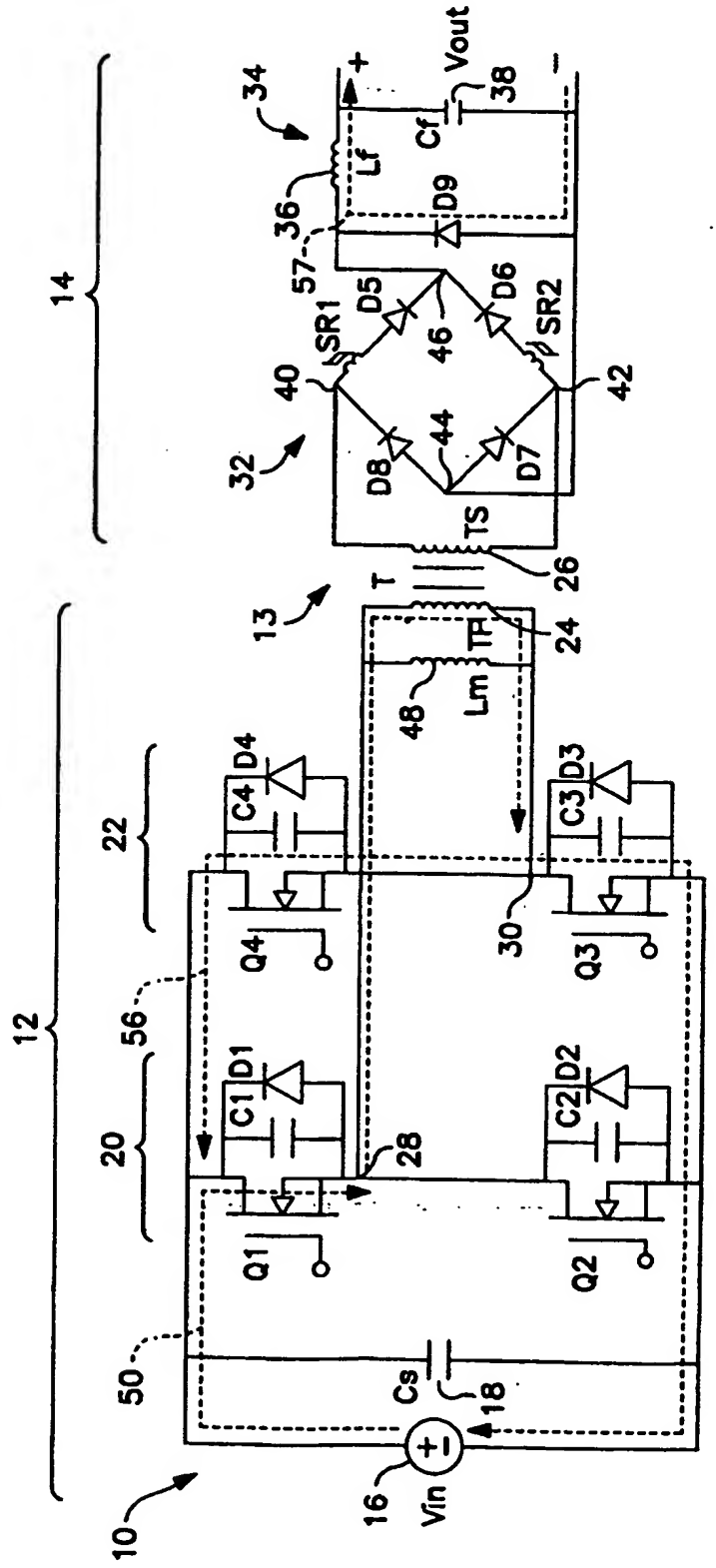
14
34
+
Vout
38
-
Cf
Lf
36
D9
57
D5
D6
SR1
SR2
46
40
42
32
D8
44
D7
TS
26
T
13
24
TP
48
Lm
22
D4
C4
D3
C3
Q4
30
Q3
12
56
20
D1
C1
D2
C2
28
Q1
Q2
50
Cs
18
16
Vin
10

FIG. 2B

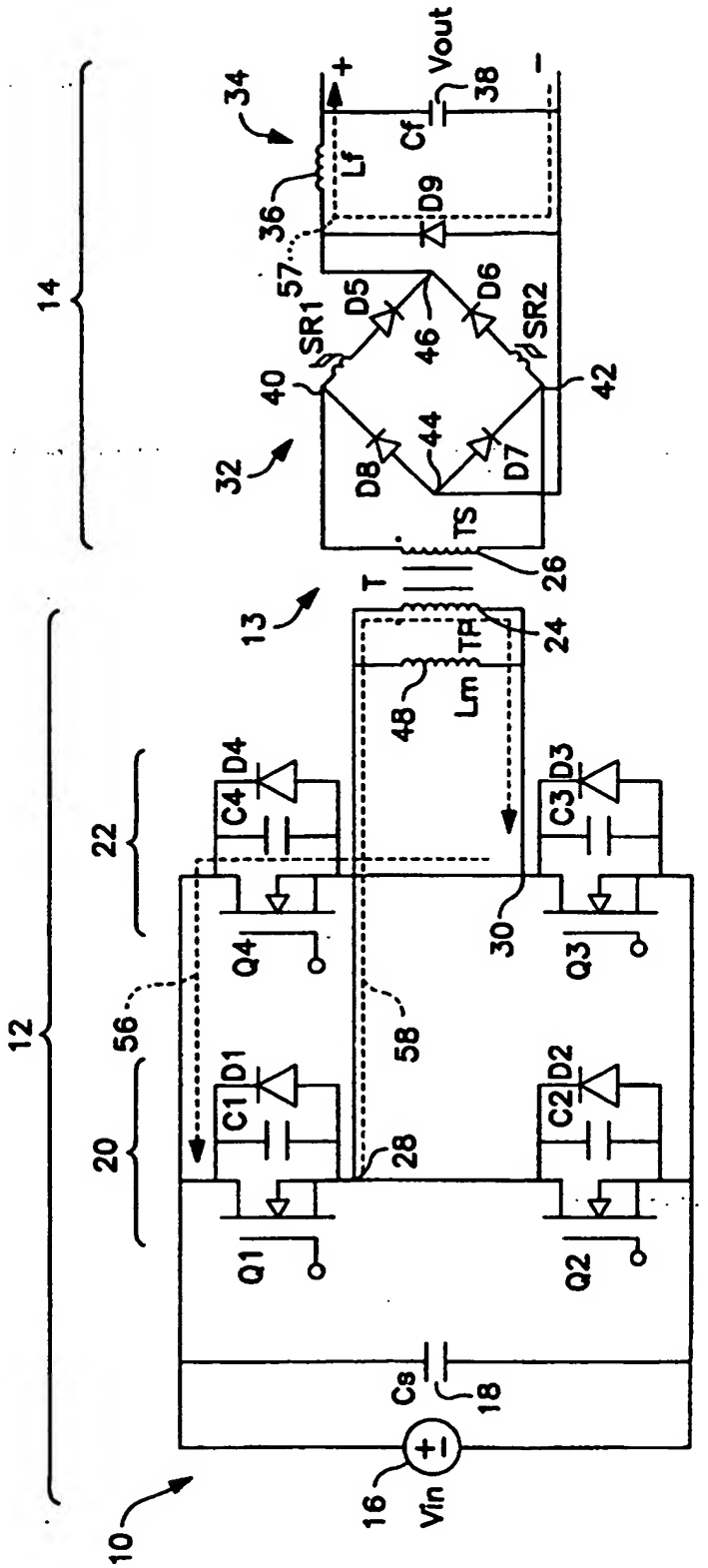
Vout
+
-
34
38
Cf
Lf
36
D9
57
D5
D6
SR1
SR2
46
40
42
44
32
D8
D7
TS
26
T
13
TR
24
48
Lm
14
22
C4
D4
C3
D3
Q4
Q3
30
12
56
58
C1
D1
C2
D2
20
28
Q1
Q2
Cs
18
16
Vin
10

FIG. 2C

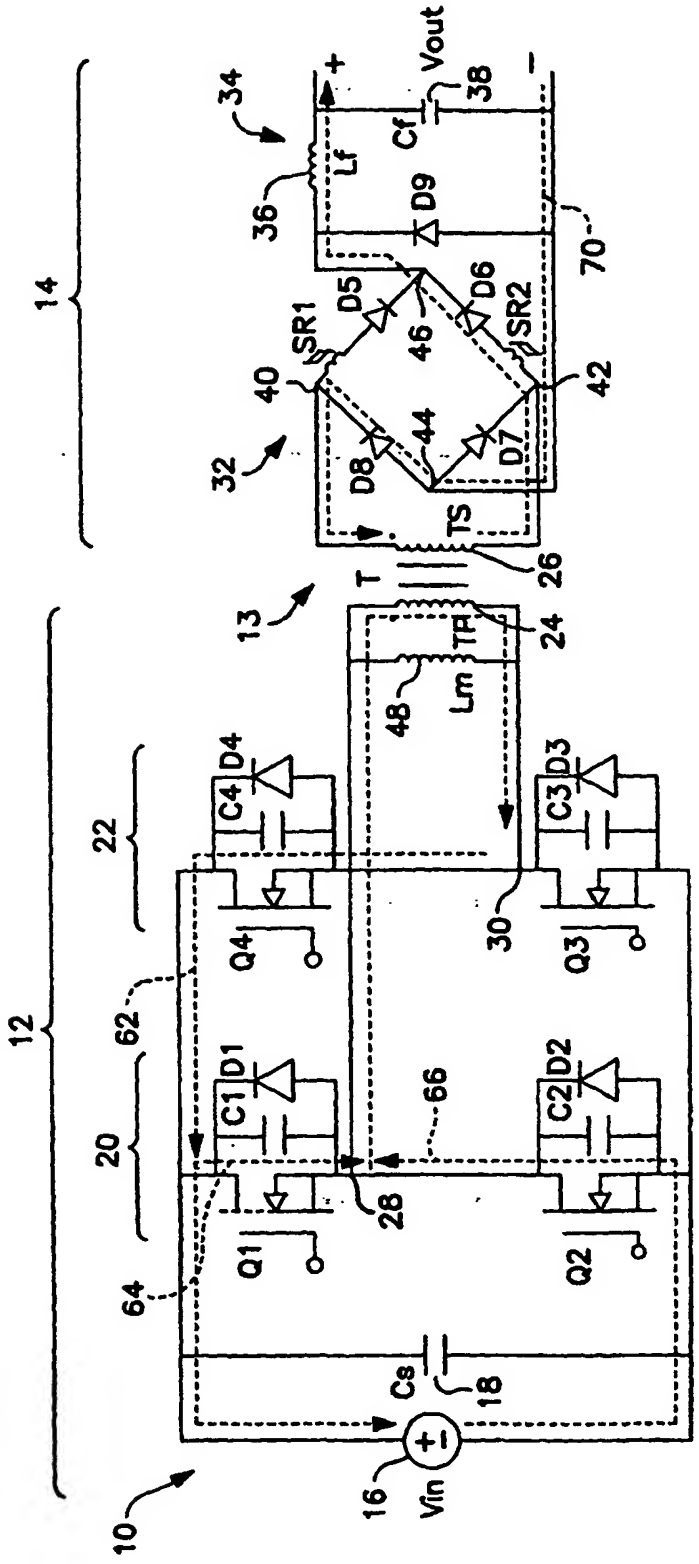
14
34
36
Lf
Cf
Vout
38
D9
70
D5
D6
SR1
SR2
46
40
42
32
D8
D7
44
TS
26
T
13
TP
24
48
Lm
22
D4
C4
D3
C3
Q4
Q3
30
12
62
D1
C1
D2
C2
66
20
28
Q1
Q2
64
Cs
18
16
Vin
10

FIG. 2D

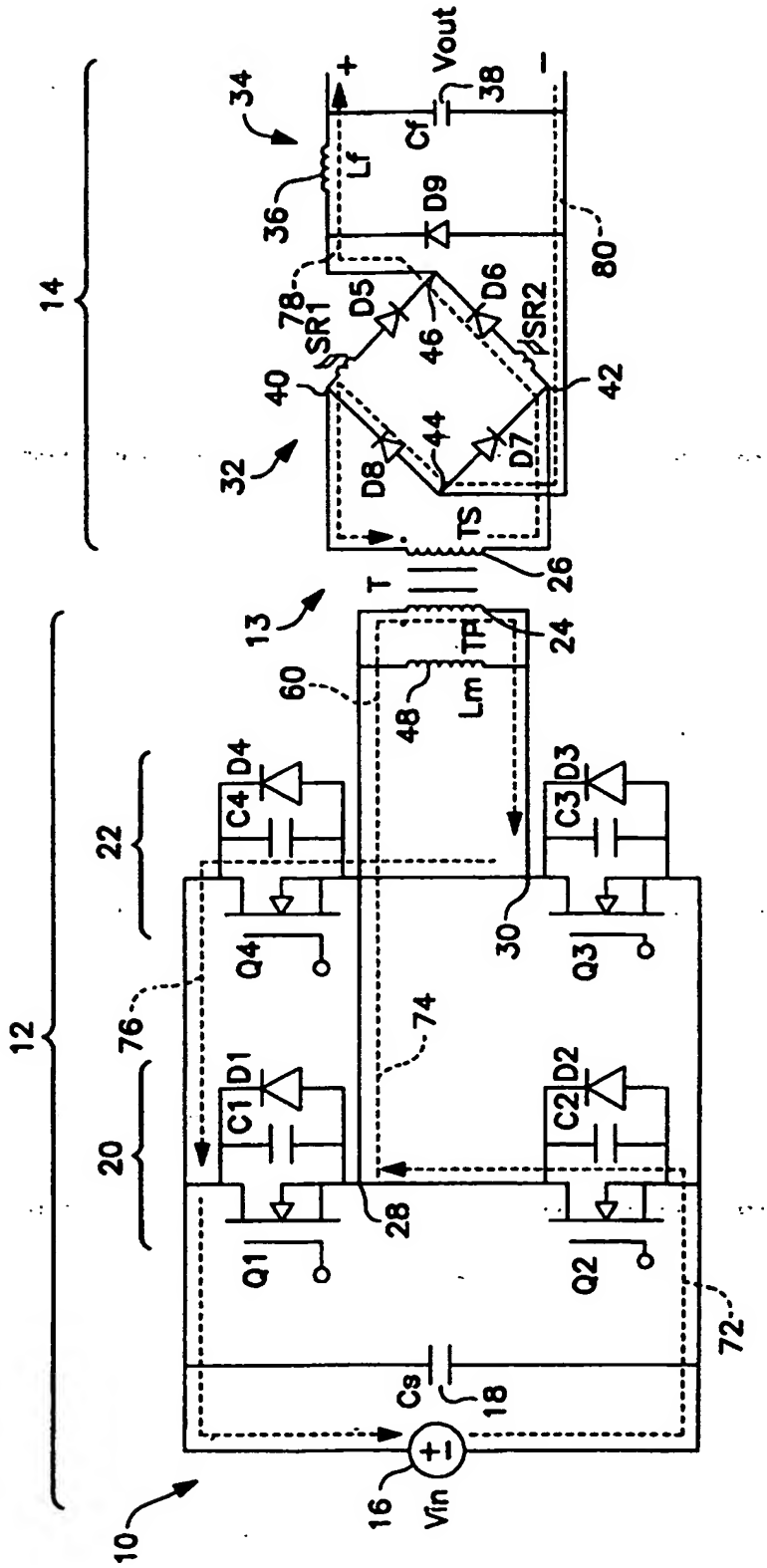
14
34
36
Lf
Cf
Vout
38
+
-
D9
80
78
SR1
D5
D6
SR2
46
40
42
32
D8
44
D7
TS
26
T
13
TP
24
60
48
Lm
22
C4
D4
C3
D3
Q4
Q3
30
12
76
74
20
C1
D1
C2
D2
Q1
Q2
28
72
Cs
18
16
Vin
10

FIG. 2E

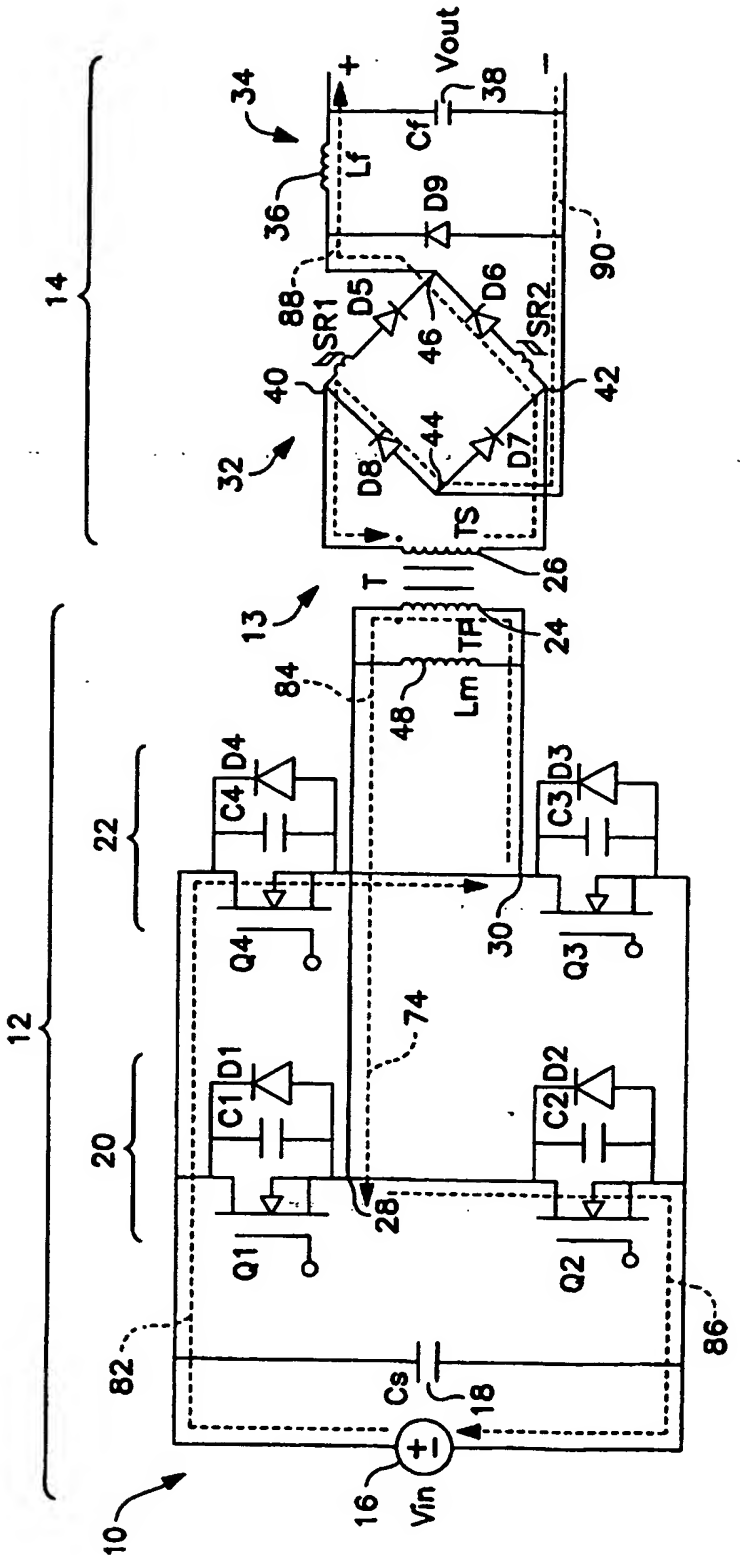
14
34
36
Lf
Cf
Vout
38
D9
90
88
SR1
D5
D6
SR2
46
40
42
32
D8
44
D7
TS
26
T
13
TP
24
84
48
Lm
22
C4
D4
C3
D3
Q4
30
Q3
12
74
20
C1
D1
C2
D2
28
Q1
Q2
86
82
Cs
18
16
Vin
10

FIG. 2F

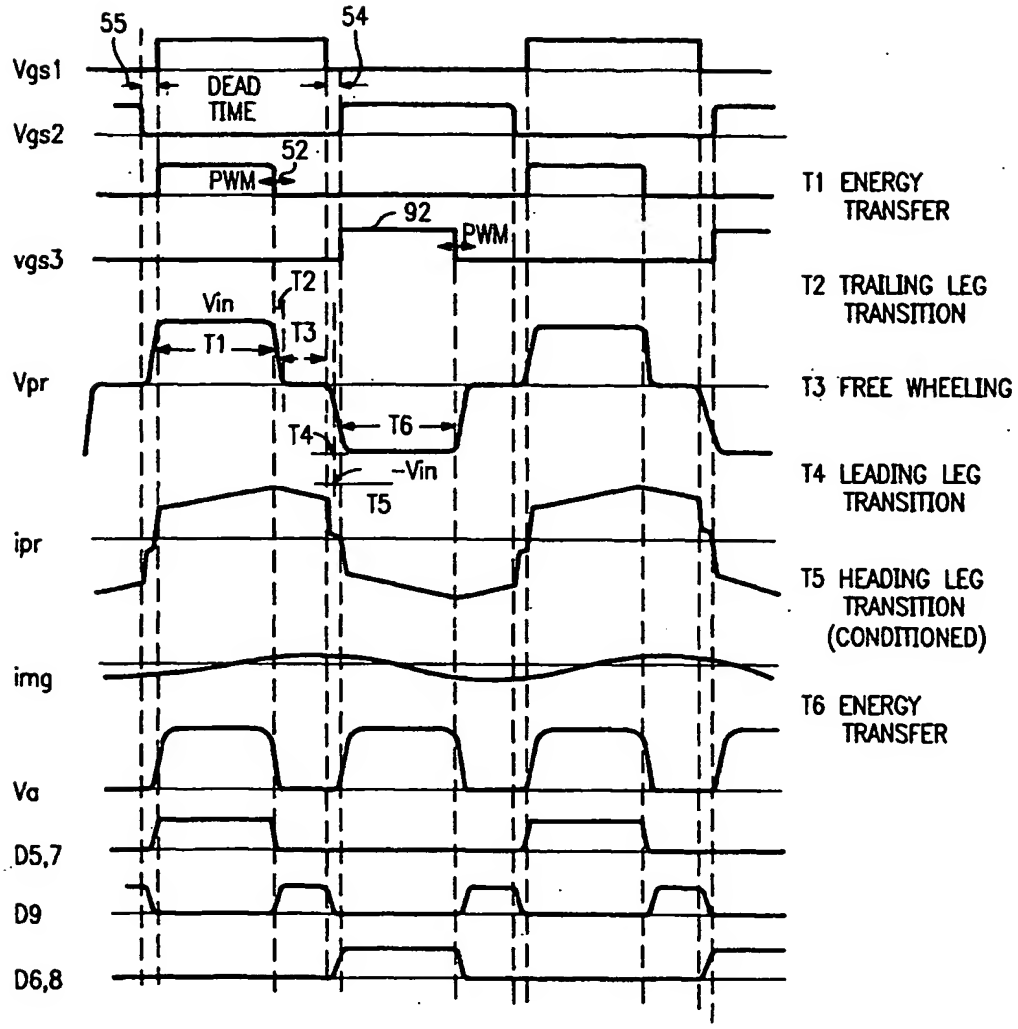
55
54
Vgs1
DEAD TIME
Vgs2
52
PWM
92
PWM
vgs3
T2
Vin
T1
T3
Vpr
T4
T6
-Vin
T5
ipr
img
Va
D5,7
D9
D6,8
T1 ENERGY TRANSFER
T2 TRAILING LEG TRANSITION
T3 FREE WHEELING
T4 LEADING LEG TRANSITION
T5 HEADING LEG TRANSITION (CONDITIONED)
T6 ENERGY TRANSFER

FIG. 3

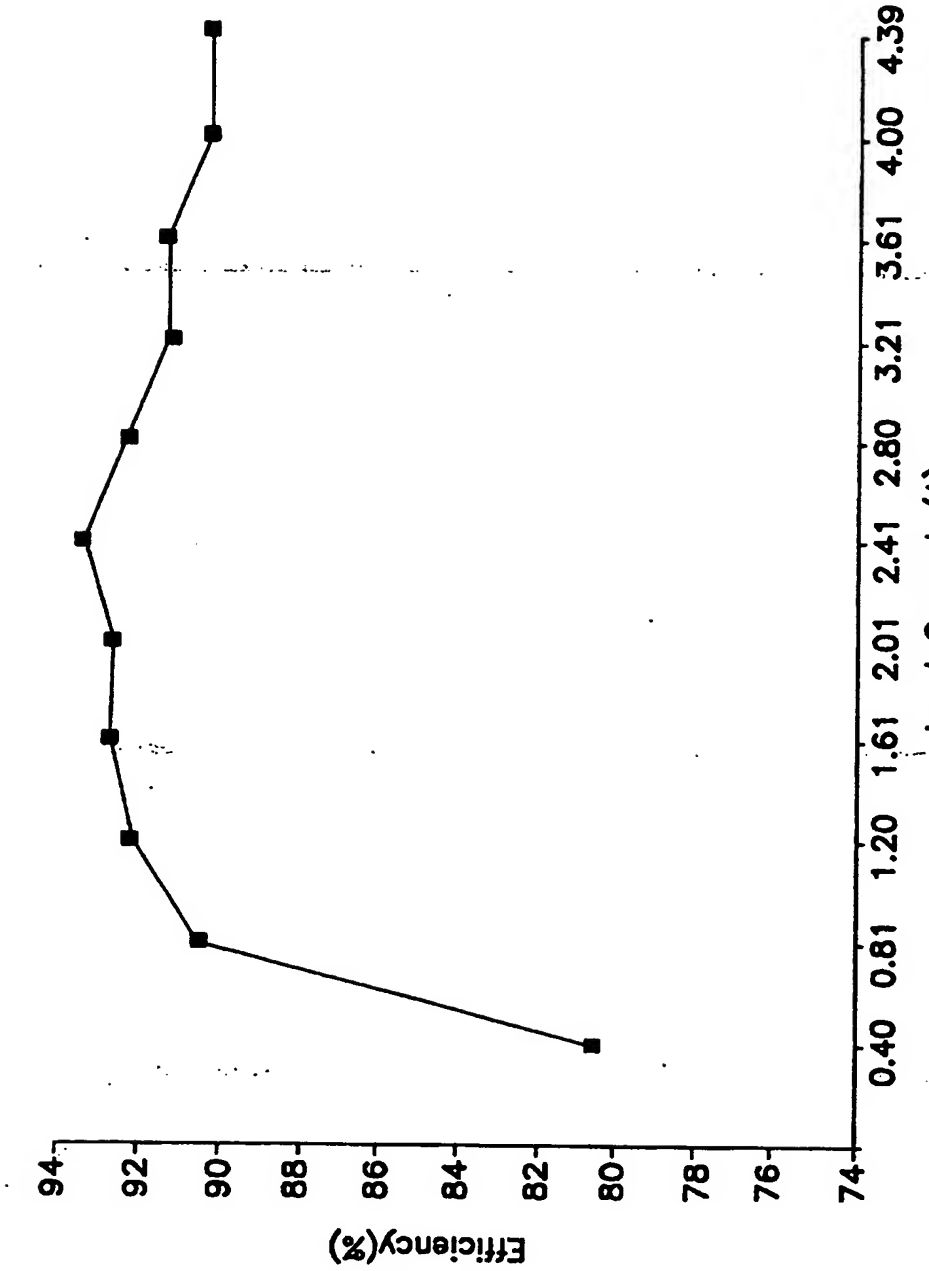
Efficiency(%)
94
92
90
88
86
84
82
80
78
76
74
0.40
0.81
1.20
1.61
2.01
2.41
2.80
3.21
3.61
4.00
4.39
Load Current (A)
Measured efficiency

FIG. 4

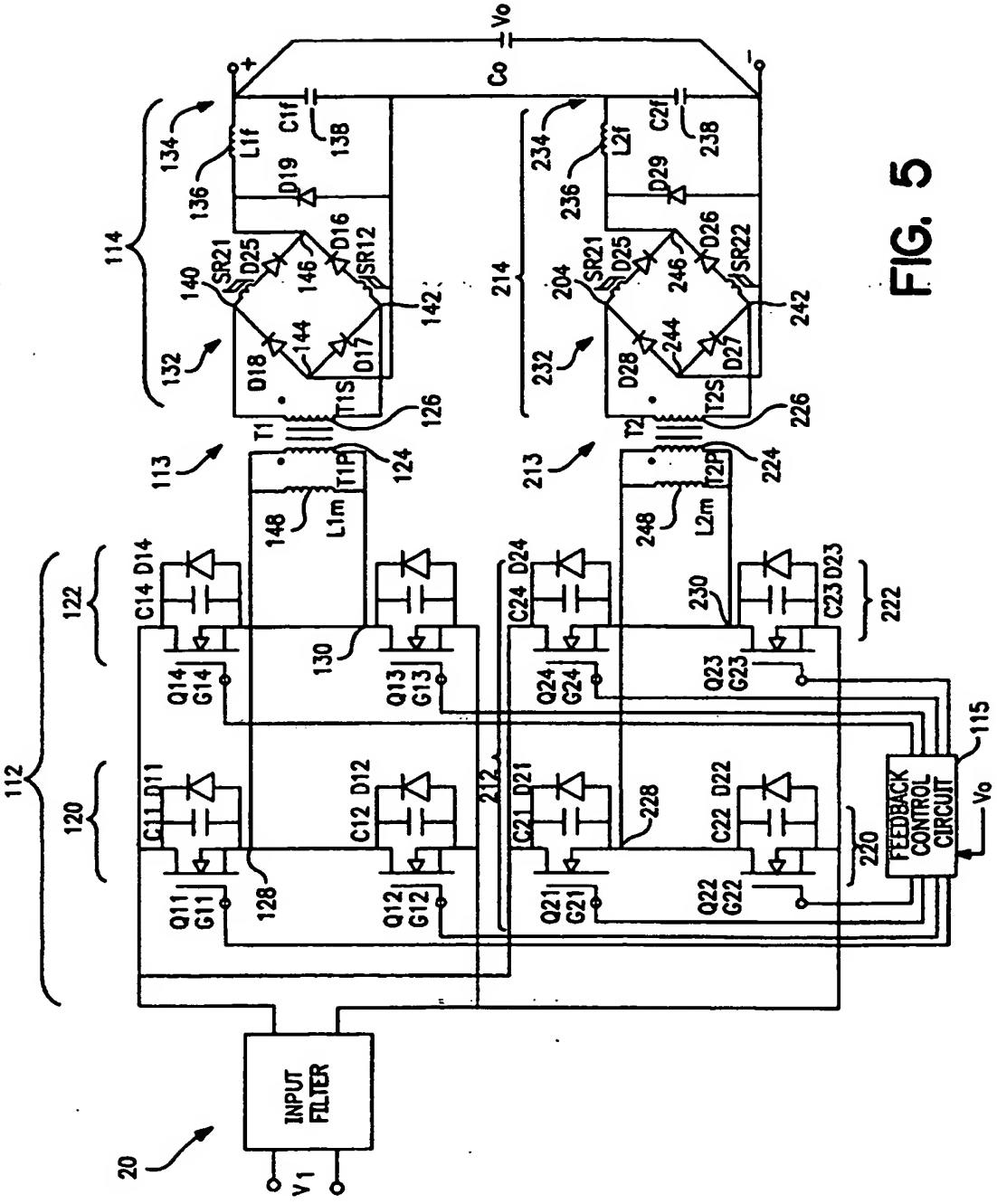
Vo
Co
+
-
114
134
136
L1f
C1f
138
D19
D16
SR12
140
SR21
D25
146
142
144
D17
D18
132
T1S
126
T1
113
T1P
124
148
L1m
122
C14 D14
Q14
G14
130
Q13
G13
112
120
C11 D11
Q11
G11
128
C12 D12
Q12
G12
214
234
L2f
C2f
238
D29
236
D26
SR22
204
SR21
D25
246
242
244
D27
D28
232
T2S
226
T2
213
T2P
224
248
L2m
C24 D24
Q24
G24
230
C23 D23
Q23
G23
222
212
C21 D21
Q21
G21
228
C22 D22
Q22
G22
220
115
FEEDBACK CONTROL CIRCUIT
Vo
INPUT FILTER
20
V1

FIG. 5